



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Cal/EPA Secretary Asks New EPA Administrator for Expedited Approval of Old Waiver Request to Create Coastwide No-Discharge Zone

California's Request to Create No-Sludge Zone Stalled Since 2005

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Cal/EPA Secretary Linda Adams today underscored the Schwarzenegger Administration's strong commitment to the environment as she hand delivered a letter to the federal EPA asking that it act on California's request to protect the coast against human waste in ships' sewage.

Adams is asking U.S. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson for action on a 2006 state request that it be allowed to enforce California's 2005 Clean Coast Act (Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto). Because of the interaction of federal and state law, California needs an EPA "waiver" before it can prohibit cargo ships and cruise liners from discharging sewage and human waste into California's coastal waters. The state's Clean Coast Act already prohibits the dumping of gray water from many large ships in coastal waters.

Adams hand delivered the request in writing to Jackson during a meeting in Washington DC. She expressed the hope that the Obama Administration will act on a matter that has been unresolved for more than 3 years old.

"Our coastline is an irreplaceable state treasure, and allowing the State of California to place limits on sewage discharges from cruise ships and large vessels is of critical importance for protecting our coastal waters," Adams said in a letter to Administrator Jackson.

The State Water Resources Control Board, part of the Cal/EPA family, is charged with protecting the state's fresh and ocean waters. It submitted extensive documentation when the state requested its "waiver" from the federal EPA.

California's 2005 law establishes no discharge zones three nautical miles from the shore along the length of the California coastline from Oregon to Mexico for discharges of gray water (from such sources as washing machines, showers, etc).

The U.S. EPA has added 42 additional California beaches to its list of impaired beaches and dumping by ships at sea may contribute to the pollution involved. These discharges are a continuing and year-round source of pathogens and other pollutants.

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Cruise lines already have a voluntary compliance agreement for discharges within California waters and should not incur large costs to meet additional standards.

Assisting the shipping and cruise industries to be better environmental stewards has been a Schwarzenegger priority with better sewage hookups in ports and heavy duty electrical connections at piers to allow ships to shut polluting engines while in port. The California Water Boards also have been supervising cleanup of legacy pollution associated with historic port activities.

California is a major cruise point of embarkation and the Clean Coast Act dovetails with other efforts to promote cruises while protecting the state's irreplaceable natural resources.

Text of the Letter:

February 24, 2009

The Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator
United States Environmental Protection Agency
401 M. Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

The State of California respectfully requests the expedited approval of our waiver application with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) for a coast-wide no discharge zone (NDZ) to prohibit the discharge of sewage and sewage sludge from cruise ships and large oceangoing vessels. With the change in Administration and your appointment as Administrator, I wanted to communicate to you that preventing pollution from ocean vessels is a high priority for California.

Our coastline is an irreplaceable state treasure, and allowing the State of California to place limits on sewage discharges from cruise ships and large vessels is of critical importance for protecting our coastal waters. California's coastal waters and marine sanctuaries should not be used as a vessel dumping ground. People from around the world make California a top travel destination because of our pristine coastline. Approving our request would help the cruise ship industry as well, because by protecting California's beautiful coast, we ensure that our state continues to attract visitors from around the world.

As a result of increasing pollution from cruise ships and large oceangoing vessels, California enacted the Clean Coast Act of 2005 which placed prohibitions on various vessel wastes. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) requested the USEPA for a waiver from the Clean Water Act (CWA) for California to regulate the discharge of sewage from cruise ships and oceangoing vessels that weigh 300 gross tons or more. The SWRCB submitted an application to USEPA on April 5, 2006 for a coast-wide NDZ to prohibit sewage and sewage

sludge discharges from cruise ships and large oceangoing vessels. It is my understanding our application is still under consideration at USEPA.

Under state law, the SWRCB is charged with protecting the beneficial uses of California's waters, including marine waters. California's coastal waters include approximately 889 water contact recreational areas, 10 existing and 19 proposed drinking water desalination intakes, 34 areas of special biological significance, four national marine sanctuaries, many state marine protected areas, national and state parks, commercial and recreational fisheries, shellfish growing areas, and essential fish habitat. The 2006 CWA 303(d) list for nonpoint sources and unknown sources of microbial pollution includes 69 critical coastal marine areas, which could be impacted by pollution from vessels. Discharges from vessels of treated and untreated sewage pose a public health threat to California's coastline, including the presence of human pathogens. These pathogens pose a serious threat to all Californians, and our visitors, who enjoy our picturesque beaches and surf our waves, for which California is world renowned.

I thank you for your attention to our request for assistance. We look forward to working with you, and your team, in the future on this issue and others of mutual concern. If you have any questions or need additional information regarding our application, please do not hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,

Linda S. Adams
Secretary for Environmental Protection

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